

New York Times
October 10, 1963

President Kennedy's news conference
Washington, October 9, 1963

16 Q. Mr. President, how do you feel about Senator Gruening's proposal to set up a Congressional committee as a watchdog over the C.I.A.?

A. I think the present committee—there is one in both the House and Senate which maintains very close liaison with the C.I.A.—is best, considering the sensitive nature of the Central Intelligence Agency's work.

As you know, there is a Congressman—a Congressional committee in the House, and one in the Senate composed of members of the Appropriations Committee and the Armed Services Committee. They meet frequently with Mr. McCone. He also testifies before the Foreign Relations Committee of the House and the Senate and the general Armed Services Committee, and I think the Congress has, through that organization, the means of keeping a liaison with him.

In addition, I have an advisory council which was headed by Dr. Killian formerly, now Mr. Clark Clifford. It includes Jimmy Doolittle and others who—Robert Murphy also served as an advisory committee to me on the work of the intelligence community. I am well satisfied with the present arrangement.

20 Q. Mr. President, the former head of the C.I.A., Allen Dulles, says in an interview in The Journal-American today that reports of disputes between the C.I.A. and the State Department with various branches of the Government in South Vietnam have arisen because of a lack of a clear-cut operational policy in Washington. And he goes on to say that he thinks what is needed is less backbiting between U.S. agency officials. In view of the defense you just gave of C.I.A., would you care to agree with Dulles's charge or contest it?

A. I would agree with the last part of it, that the agencies—as you know, we are faced with a very difficult problem in South Vietnam which you are all familiar with, both in the military and the political sides. Men have different views about what actions we should take, and they talk to members of the press—to all of you—in Saigon, here in Washington.

But I must say that, as of today—and I think this is particularly true since General Taylor and Secretary McNamara came back—I know of no disagreement between the State Department at the top, the C.I.A. at the top, Defense at the top, the White House and Ambassador Lodge on what our basic policies will be and what steps we will take to implement them.

Now, if down below there is disagreement, I think in part it would be because they are not wholly informed of what actions we are taking. Some of them are necessarily confidential, but I think our policy—well I—we cannot say what effect it is going to have, I think we are in agreement on what—about what we ought to do. I would think that Saigon and personnel of various agencies should support that policy,

because that is the policy we are going to carry out for a while.